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SUPPLY FUNCTIONS OF CORPS

MISSION: Prepare Report and Recommendations on the Supply Functions
of the Corps within an Army.

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SUPPLY FUNCTIONS OF CORPS

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SUPPLY FUNCTIONS OF THE CORPS

SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION

1. Mission and Scope. This report presents a study of the supply functions of the corps within an army. It includes the prescribed and the actual supply and maintenance functions of the corps headquarters during combat. The report presents a discussion of the modifications proposed by armies and corps, and draws conclusions on the efficacy of the proposals. Maintenance and service operations have been included in the report due to their influence on supply operations. Recommendations for modification of the field service regulations on supply and maintenance in the army, and changes in the supply organization of the corps are made.

2. General. During the period of operations in the European Theater comments on the functions of the corps in supply and maintenance operations were made from time to time in the field, and suggestions for improvements were proposed. These frequently had to do with overcoming a local or temporary deficiency. While the main features of corps procedures conformed to the principles expressed in the field service regulations, there were minor variations in execution, depending on the combat and supply situation, the physical conditions, and the desires of the commanders. It is recognized that there is a human tendency to agglomerate into the organization all supplies and services that may be needed to meet special conditions that may or will arise. Attempt has been made in this report to evaluate the needs and effects of changes in army and corps supply operations.

a. Material for the report was obtained from various armies and corps, and supply and maintenance publications of the European Theater. Additional information was received from supply and maintenance personnel of the General Board.

SECTION 2

OPERATIONS

3. Prescribed Functions.

a. The normal supply and maintenance functioning of a corps within an army is prescribed in Section I of Chapter 5, Field Manual 100-10, Field Service Regulations, Administration. The field manual states that, "when a Corps is part of an army it has few administrative functions other than those pertaining to corps troops." Reserve supplies for component units are not prescribed, and the corps is not a link in the chain of supply and maintenance, with certain exceptions.

b. The field manual prescribes that the corps is to allocate and act upon requisition for ammunition, and to coordinate the supply and the maintenance performed by army maintenance units designated to supplement the organic maintenance of the divisions and corps units. It is stated that, due to the bearing of the status of essen-

tial combat supplies on the tactical missions assigned, the status reports from the divisions and corps troops are to be transmitted through the corps to the army. The corps commander may obtain knowledge of the status of supply and maintenance, necessary to gauge the combat efficiency of divisions, by personal or staff inspections, and by requiring reports from the divisions.

c. The corps commander is authorized to recommend to the army locations or changes of location of the army supply points supporting his divisions and corps troops. For supply and maintenance of corps troops, it is prescribed that the corps commander perform functions analogous to those of a division commander.

d. The responsibility of the corps commander for the coordinated effort of the corps as a whole axiomatically extends to include knowledge of the adequacy and suitability of the supplies, and of the maintenance services supporting the operations of the divisions and corps troops. To assist him in obtaining this information, it is necessary for his staff to have continuous knowledge of the supply and maintenance situation throughout the corps, to know the needs, and whether or not the needs will be met. This required close contact with the combat units, the army supply and maintenance points supporting the corps, and the army service staff.

4. Actual Operations.

a. The functioning of supply and maintenance in corps in armies in the European Theater generally conformed to the procedure given in the field service regulations. A common exception was in the Class II and IV supply of corps troops. For normal issues or replacements these frequently dealt directly with the army supply installations without having their requisitions consolidated at corps headquarters. Equipment and supply status reports were commonly transmitted directly to army by divisions, with information copies to the corps.

b. In some cases, corps accumulated small stocks of rapidly expended or urgently required materials for direct issue to both divisions and corps troops. Stocks at supply points of this character were usually small and the supply points served a special and temporary purpose.

c. The corps function of recommending locations and changes of supply and maintenance installations was generally extended to include reconnaissance for sites and some degree of supervision of operations concerning divisions and corps troops. Coordination of army services supporting corps was also frequently extended, particularly in the case of bath and laundry units and shoe repair sections.

5. Corps Supply Staff Functioning. The services represented in the corps headquarters staff, in addition to their duties of making recommendations to the corps commander, keeping him informed of the supply and maintenance status, and making allocations according to operations needs, generally acted as expeditors for divisional supply and maintenance. This was particularly the case for critical or controlled items. By acting as coordinating liaison officers, they applied their knowledge of the divisional supply and maintenance situation, and of the combat situation, to obtain the most rapid and efficient service from the army supply and maintenance units supporting the corps.

6. Deficiencies and Proposed Modifications.

a. The comments on deficiencies and suggestions for modifications of procedures and organizations received from the headquarters of armies and corps in the European Theater included the following recommendations:

- (1) Corps operations of supply points for divisions and corps troops with small stocks of certain signal supplies such as wire, cable, batteries, and radio sets,^{1,4} and similar supply points for Medical items such as plaster of paris, solutions, sutures, dressings, and whole blood.⁴ The stocks were to be at low levels for day to day requirements determined according to the operations needs, and the supply and transportation personnel were to be augmented.
- (2) Corps location, operation, and displacement, with attached service troops, of Class I, III, and V supply points, particularly for situations of rapid movement when distances were great.^{4,5} It was proposed that direct shipment to the corps supply points be made by the communications zone.⁵
- (3) Consolidation, drawing from army supply points, and breakdown of corps troops' Class II and IV Quartermaster supply requirements, by the corps headquarters with augmented service personnel and transportation.^{4,6}
- (4) Assumption by the corps of a more important role in services, with attached Quartermaster service units and operations control of Ordnance maintenance units.⁴

b. Recommendations countering these proposals were received. These included recommendations for holding to the present procedures³ and for retaining present procedures except in highly mobile situations approximating detached operations, for which it was recommended that the corps operate, with attached troops, as for a detached corps.²

c. The field recommendations did not include comments on the sources of the augmented personnel and transportation proposed, or on the effects the stock of the corps supply points might have on the present army supply procedures.

SECTION 3

DISCUSSION

7. Fast-moving Supplies.

a. The advantages gained by establishing stocks of fast-moving supplies in corps supply points, at levels determined according to the combat and supply situations, are the reduction in time required for replenishment of the using unit, and economy of transportation between the corps and the army supply point. Time by the using unit is gained directly through the reduction of distance to the supply point. While economy of transportation could be gained by consolidating requirements of several small units by the battalion or division

supply agency, or combining several classes or services of supply in one trip, the urgency of resupply is often so great that each unit must undertake its own resupply and make an individual trip with a part load. In numerous traffic surveys made in the corps zones it was observed that there was a large volume of divisional and corps troops unit individual traffic to army supply points with fractional loads. Advancing the supply point for items most urgently required into the corps zone frequently results in shorter unit trips, and permits consolidated re-supply trips between the corps and army supply points.

b. The disadvantages of corps supply points are the greater dispersion of army supply stocks which may become more critical in other corps zones, and the increase in personnel and transport required by a corps to control, supervise, and operate the supply points. The disadvantages of stock dispersion may be minimized by keeping stock levels at day to day requirements, which also would reduce the difficulty of moving a corps supply point. There would be a likelihood of further disadvantage from tendency to keep the corps supply on trucks, immobilizing the vehicles. The proposed corps supply service for limited signal and medical supply is comparable to that now operated by corps engineers, and to the supply functions of division signal and medical units for divisional troops.

8. Class I, III, and V Supply.

a. Operation of Class I, III, and V supply points by the corps gains the advantage of placing the control under a headquarters that is in close touch with, and sensitive to the combat situation, and which has a greater certainty of communications with the using units. This is particularly advantageous in situation of rapid movement, as in a deep advance or a pursuit.

b. It has the disadvantages of having the control in the hands of headquarters that is not in close touch with the supply situation, of placing an additional administrative burden on the corps for both the staff function and for the administration and operation of the large number of supply point and transportation personnel, and of dispersion of stocks. The dispersion of stocks for corps supply points would require a higher total stockage in the army areas, at a time when army stocks are being used to fill the extended supply line. Direct delivery to corps supply points from communications zone would require that agency to go into retail operations, and would entail communications delay.

c. Other methods used for controlling Class I, III, and V supply points during rapid advances were the echeloning forward of army supply staff personnel to keep close touch with the corps combat situation, and creation of army rolling reserves which were held well forward prepared for immediate displacement to point of need. It may be noted that during deep advances and pursuits the daily consumption of Class III increases, and that the consumption of Class V usually decreases markedly.

9. Class II and IV Quartermaster Supply.

a. The advantages gained by corps consolidation of corps troops requisitions for Class II and IV Quartermaster supply, and in handling items, lie in the conservation of transportation, the allocation of the available items to the troops most needing them, and the removal of many individual unit operations from the army supply point by substituting corps bulk operations. Economy of transportation by

consolidated corps drawing on army supply points has been discussed earlier in this section.

b. Most army Class II and IV supply points made issues, except for controlled items, in the order of arrival of units. This may work a hardship on units having a more urgent need of items in limited supply. The physical work of filling Class II and IV Quartermaster requisitions is a slow operation, requiring selection from a large number of items. The time required for filling a small unit's requisition for small numbers of many items can approximate the time required to fill a large command's bulk requisition.

c. The disadvantages of corps operation of these supplies for corps troops lies in the necessity for providing the supply headquarters for control and administration, and for providing the operating troops and transport. In some cases Quartermaster battalion headquarters attached to corps performed this function and attached truck companies provided the transportation.⁸

d. If Class II and IV Quartermaster supplies are stocked in corps, a further disadvantage is the reduction in selectivity of the corresponding army supply stock by separation into several smaller lots. In this case it could be expected that the army stock would tend to return to its former level, increasing the total amount within the army, and that corps displacement would be retarded by the additional effort necessary to displace the corps supply point.

10. Services other than Supply.

a. Corps control of certain services other than supply has the advantages of facilitating and expediting performance of maintenance and such personnel services as bathing and laundry, or shoe repair. The practice of decentralizing control of army bath and laundry units to corps frequently was adopted in the European Theater, and at times shoe repair units were similarly made available.^{7,8} This practice gained flexibility and efficient operation by permitting the corps to concentrate the service according to the situation of the troops who could avail themselves of the service, and reduced communications and movement delays. Corps now control maintenance units in the case of the engineer maintenance companies attached to corps engineer headquarters or to combat groups.⁷

b. The procedure proposed is close to the execution of the common army operating procedure under which the service elements supporting a corps are grouped geographically by services into battalions for support of each corps.^{7,8} With continuity of supervisory and operating personnel, the result was tantamount to decentralizing operations controls to the corps without burdening the corps with the administration of the service units.

c. During operations many corps had Quartermaster truck companies assigned to them, substantially on a permanent basis. The normal attachment was two companies. They were used for moving the corps command post echelons and corps headquarters troops in displacements, to supplement the divisional transportation, and for emergency supply movements. A Quartermaster battalion headquarters was frequently attached to a corps.⁷ The battalion headquarters was used for various purposes, usually including control of the truck companies, and at times for the supervision of other Quartermaster services under corps control. It is suggested that normal and continuous attachment of a Quartermaster battalion headquarters would serve advantageously for the control of Quartermaster services attached to or supporting a

corps. If augmented with supply personnel, it could also serve for operation of Class II and IV Quartermaster supply of corps troops.

11. Total Service Troops.

a. The recommended additions to corps supply functions for fast-moving medical and signal supplies, Class I, III, and V supplies, and Class II and IV Quartermaster supply would not replace completely any installations now operated by armies under existing procedures. It does not appear that the loads on army installations would be so reduced that army supply service personnel and transportations could be released. It follows that the proposals, if adopted, would require increases in the total numbers of supply personnel and transportation. In the case of Class I, II, and V supply, the numbers would be large.

b. Performance of certain maintenance functions and services other than supply by corps would to some extent reduce the loads on army services, but would not remove them completely. Bath and similar units used by corps substantially on a full-time basis would not require duplication in the army troop allotments. Continuing army needs would require service troop duplication in the cases of other services, if the functions for corps troops and divisions were transferred to corps.

12. Total Army Supply Stockage.

a. The addition of small stocks of certain fast-moving medical and signal items to corps supply units would result in increase of the total army stocks of those items by about one day of supply, since the army supply services concerned would still feel the necessity for sustaining their usual stock levels.

b. In the case of Class I, II, and V supply operation by corps, the commitment of the army stocks to corps, or the by-passing of the army by direct shipments from the communications zone to corps, would place the the army supply at a material disadvantage. The commitment of part of the army stock to corps would make the army stock rigid rather than flexible. By-passing the army in supply from the communications zone would result both in depletion of army stocks and loss of army flexibility and control of operations.

c. The increases in distances accompanying deep advances or pursuits result in more of the totals of supplies being in transit filling the pipeline. To offset the reduction in stocks actually available at army points, it would be necessary for the army to take strong measures to increase the stocks so as to be able to continue support of the operation. This would come at the time when the maximum amount of transportation is already committed to the motorization of combat troops, and the forward echelonment of supplies. Stringency would be felt primarily in supplies of gasoline, and secondarily in food.

d. In the case of corps Class II and IV Quartermaster supply, no increase in quantity of or decrease in selectivity of the corresponding army stocks would result if the corps operations were confined to requisition consolidation, drawing from army supply, and breakdown to corps troops. But if the corps operation led to maintaining a stock, it would again be necessary for the army to retain its present levels, both to retain its capacity to support operations and to retain selectivity.

SECTION 4

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

13. Conclusions.

a. The issues raised in the presentation of the supply and service functions of the corps within an army have to do with the speed of re-supply of items consumed in quantity, supply flexibility to permit maximum exploitation of rapid advances, reduction of transportation volumes and distances, and efficient and flexible employment of services.

b. The desirable factors can be achieved by increasing the self-sufficiency of the corps, making it in effect a small army, but this introduces a number of undesirable factors. The mobility of the corps would be reduced. Since the corps supply requirements would still have to pass through the army headquarters, the time delay in processing requisitions to services of supply would not be reduced. The corps is not in direct contact with the communications zone, from which the basic supply of Class I, III, and V items must come; further, direct supply by-passing the army places the communications zone in retail business. The augmentation of service personnel and transportation cannot be done at the expense of present army allotments, and would require increased totals. Army supply stocks would have to be maintained at the present levels, and the totals within the army would be increased.

c. Where the situation makes smallstocks of fast-moving medical and signal supplies desirable in the corps zone, it appears that these can be undertaken by the supply sections of the corps signal and medical troops with minimum augmentation, and without augmentation of the corps supply staff.

d. The question of Class I, III, and V supply has been pressing, particularly in rapid movements resulting in deep advances. The best approximation that can be made to meet most of the adverse factors is the prompt use of army forward liaison parties or authoritative supply personnel in situations of rapid movement.

e. The supply service of Class II and IV Quartermaster items for corps troops can be improved by making the service analogous to that in divisions, without stocking items in the corps. This further offers the advantage of reduction in number of small unit supply transactions at army supply points. This end can be attained by regular attachment of a Quartermaster supply headquarters to the corps, without augmentating the corps staff.

f. It is desirable to extend the practice of decentralizing operations control of those army services for which close contact with the combat troops is essential. Need for complete corps control of maintenance and service units supporting the corps has not been found to be general. An exception may be made in the case of a Quartermaster headquarters, which can be used advantageously to supervise any Quartermaster service unit under corps operations control, and for the Class II and IV Quartermaster supply discussed above. A similar exception may be made for a transportation headquarters to operate the truck companies normally attached to a corps.

14. Recommendations. It is recommended that:

a. No major changes be made in the principles governing

the functions of a corps within an army, for supply and services as now stated in the field service regulations, but that corps troops of arms and services having supply functions be authorized to establish limited operational stocks when warranted by special conditions, as was done in the case of Signal and Medical supplies.

b. The description of army operating procedures for supply and maintenance now given in the field service regulations be extended to present means by which the army may facilitate supply and maintenance operations in corps zones with minimum upset of the army supply and maintenance situation and minimum additional burden on the corps; the use of advanced army supply liaison parties in the case of rapid movements and when warranted, practices of decentralizing operational control of service units as was done in the case of bath, laundry and shoe repair elements.

c. Transportation and Quartermaster headquarters elements be made normal attachments to a corps within an army.

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